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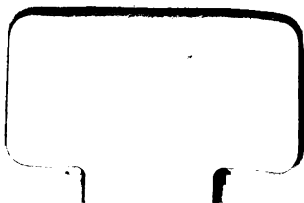
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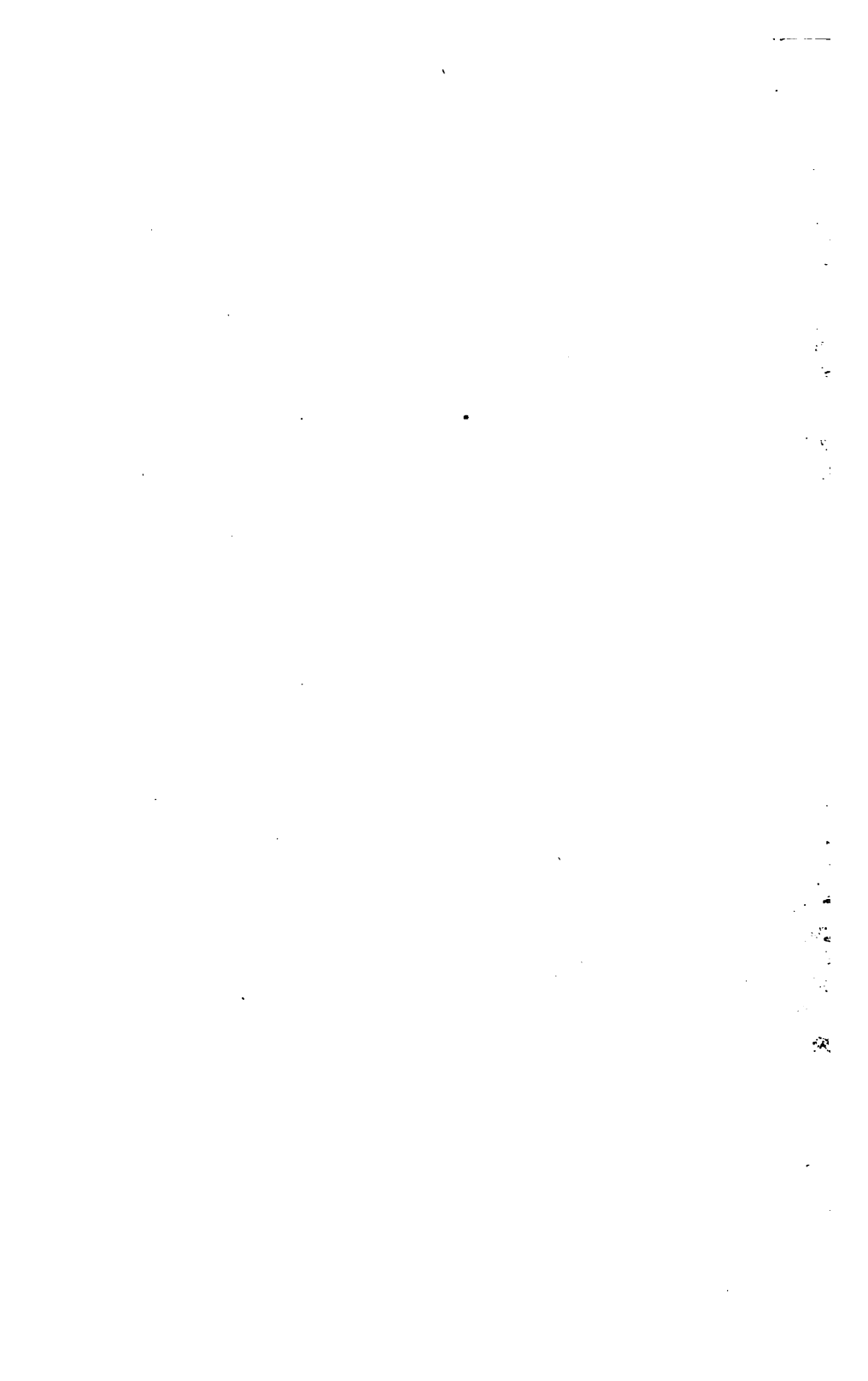
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*From the Author*

(Anonymous)

E.217

**“Is it a Sin?”**

— *Lloyd, Harry Lloyd*

**AN INQUIRY**

**INTO THE**

**LAWFULNESS OF COMPLYING WITH THE RULE**

**OF THE**

**NATIONAL BOARD**

**RELATIVE TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.**



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47

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## P R E F A C E.

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It is needless to discuss the other bearings of any course of action, until we have clearly ascertained whether it is open to us to pursue it. In many cases Truth suffers from such premature discussion. For men are apt to confound together the grounds upon which they have acted ; and the conclusion at which they have arrived upon the primary question of 'duty comes to be fortified by arguments which have, in reality, no relation to it. It would not be difficult to trace the operation of this confusion in the Education Controversy.

Throughout the following discussion, accordingly, all that is irrelevant to this fundamental question has been studiously kept out of view. When the lawfulness of complying with the Rules of the National Board is determined—and not till then—we are free to consider those Rules in their other aspects ; and at the close of these pages one or two suggestions are offered, which seem to demand the

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earnest consideration of those who have determined this question in the affirmative.

The writer is not what is termed a "supporter" of the National System. He believes that there are disadvantages inherent in *every* system of mixed, or united education; and that the Irish National System labours moreover under imperfections of *its own*, to some of which he has adverted in these pages. All that he maintains is, that we are *free to accept* the advantages which it offers; and we shall certainly be in a better position to remedy its evils as *allies* than as *enemies*.



## AN INQUIRY.

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THE Irish Education Controversy is now narrowed to a single issue.

When the National system of Education was first established, it was opposed by the Clergy of the Established Church upon various grounds, all of them more or less connected with the struggle which they were called upon to maintain in this country against the Church of Rome. But among these grounds there was one which, before long, assumed the foremost place, and which was deemed sufficient to prevent the co-operation of the Clergy in that System, "even though all the other grounds of opposition were taken away." It is needless to say that this objection was that taken to the Fundamental Rule of the National Board, relative to religious instruction. With this Rule, so far as the Bible was concerned, the majority of the Irish Clergy refused to comply; and they have justified that refusal upon the assumed unlawfulness of the submission.

It is not meant that all those, who have held aloof from the National System, have felt themselves constrained to do so upon this ground. There are many who did not think it unlawful to comply with its restrictive rules, who, at the same time, submitted to personal sacrifices in order to maintain their schools upon what they believed to be a *better* system. There were others in the same ranks, who held their place there, because they would not weaken the efforts of the Clergy to obtain some measure of state support for the system which they preferred. And, lastly, there were not a few, who shrunk from incurring the odium which attached to those who joined the National Board, especially at the time when the patronage of the Government was bestowed as the reward of such acquiescence.

But with the main body of the seceders, the question at issue has been one of principle and moral duty. Most of those who have publicly defended the course taken by the Clergy, have done so upon this ground; and the Committee of the Church Education Society, in their last Report, avow their opinion, that no lower ground would have sufficed "to justify the Clergy of a National Church in refusing to co-operate with the State in the education of the people."

Under these circumstances, it might seem that there was little room for further discussion, and that all that could be said with advantage on either side of the question had been brought fully into view. To a great extent this is true. The field of discussion is not only narrowed, but the light which is brought to bear upon it is more full; and, what is

more important, the prepossessions with which men formerly entered upon it have been gradually giving way. Still, that there is room, either for new arguments, or for a re-statement of the old, is evident from the misconceptions which even yet prevail. In the hope of dispelling some of these, in the minds of those who will regard the subject dispassionately, the writer of these pages has put together some of the arguments which have weighed with himself. He has not entered upon the discussion of the subject rashly, nor without a long and anxious consideration of its bearings.

At the outset it is necessary to lay down a distinction, which has been often drawn, and as often overlooked. This question may be considered, either as it respects *the State* or *ourselves*. We may inquire whether it is lawful in the sight of God, that the State should enjoin the restrictions upon Scriptural Teaching, which are imposed in the National System? or we may ask ourselves the question, whether *we* can, without sin, accept the aid proffered by the State under such restrictions? These two questions, it will be admitted, are quite distinct. And it is of importance that they should be kept distinct; for they rest, in some respects, upon different grounds.

The question as to the duty of the State, is one which concerns ourselves, although less nearly than the other. For every individual is a member of the State, and has an influence, although in most cases a remote one, upon its counsels. But however suitable such an inquiry may be, and however im-

portant under other circumstances, we may dispense with it in the present juncture. The leading Statesmen of all sides have come, whether justly or otherwise, to what seems to be a final decision upon this question ; and however desirous some of them may be to aid the Church in its efforts to carry on education according to its own views of what is right, there are none of them prepared to overturn, or even to impair, the System which has been established in Ireland. We may, therefore, regard this question as now settled. And the circumstance will bring with it at least this advantage, that it narrows the field of inquiry, and shuts out many topics which are irrelevant to the question with which we have now to deal.

The State having then come to what seems a *final* decision on this matter, it only remains for us to consider—what all along was the most pressing question, as it respects our own duty,—*whether we can lawfully accept the aid of the State on the proposed terms ?* The question, thus put, is limited to the case of the *non-vested* schools. The duty of the Clergy in reference to the *vested* schools, as the Archbishop of Dublin has truly remarked, does not admit of a doubt. In availing themselves of the opportunities which the rules of schools of the latter class afford, to give religious instruction to the children of their own communion, they enter into no engagement, and make no compromise.

What then are these terms? In the first place, *every child* must be allowed to receive the benefit of the *secular* education given in the schools, and of *that only*, if his parents forbid more. And, secondly,

the Managers and Teachers must undertake to refrain from *religious* instruction during the hours set apart for united secular teaching. Let us consider the former of these conditions.

The State has offered large means to aid us in carrying on our Schools, and it gives us moreover large discretionary powers in their management. It only requires as a primary condition, that the children of all denominations shall share in the benefits of the *secular* instruction given there, and in *these only*, if their parents forbid more. Is it *unlawful* in us to submit to this condition? In other words, is it wrong to communicate a *temporal* advantage to a fellow-creature, unless we are at liberty to accompany it with a *spiritual* blessing? No candid and thoughtful person will say that it is; for in fact such a maxim is contradicted by the whole course of daily life. There are few who would withhold bread from the hungry, unless they consented to receive the Bible with it. | And the teaching of our Lord Himself accords with this. Who "was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves"? it was one, who differed from him in what was deemed a vital religious question, and the source of rancorous hostility between the Jews and Samaritans;—for then, as now, the fierceness of religious strife was not in proportion to the magnitude of the question at issue, but rather to the proximity of the combatants, and to the closeness of the ties which *should* have united them. And yet the good Samaritan, whose conduct our Lord sets forth in the parable as an example, neither hesitated as to his duty to his fellowman in distress, nor even availed

himself of the obligation under which he had placed the sufferer, to instil his own views of what he deemed so important.

And the conduct of the Irish Clergy in their respective parishes is, and always has been, a noble refutation of the supposed principle we are considering. For who were they who were ever seen in the poor man's cottage, by the side of the medical attendant, when the destroying Angel made havoc of human life? Who were they, who deprived themselves and their families of the necessities of life, that they might impart to those who were in greater need, when Famine stalked through the land? Who *are* they, to whom the poor man first looks for help in his hour of need? Who, but the accredited servants of Him, who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"? And the Clergy of the Established Church have done all this *freely*, and *without conditions*. It is true, they rejoiced, when the close relation into which they were thus brought to their Roman Catholic brethren, enabled them to impart a spiritual blessing, as well as a temporal benefit;—but they did not withhold the latter, unless they were free to give the former also.

There is, indeed, an infinitely higher duty incumbent on all of us, and more especially on the Ministers of the Gospel,—that, namely, of instructing immortal souls,—and we are to avail ourselves of every favourable occasion to perform it. It is true also, that the School-room would offer a most fitting place for its performance, if there were no special impediment there. But there is such an impediment in the present instance; and the question for us to consider

is—whether we are precluded from conferring any benefit at all, and especially one which is *preparatory* to the highest, if we are not permitted to deal directly with the *highest itself*.

Let us now consider the second question, upon the solution of which our duty in this matter depends,—the question of the lawfulness of refraining from Scriptural Teaching for any time, and under any circumstances?

It may be useful to observe at the outset, that restriction in the use of the Scriptures is not prohibited by any *direct command* of God, such as those which forbid adultery, or theft, or false witness. It is indeed often said, that such restriction is a “dishonour to God’s Word,” and if so, it would clearly be a violation of the “first and great commandment.” But whether this be so, or not, will depend upon the *circumstances* of the restriction, and the *motives* which lead to it. A man who closed his Bible in the presence of mockers might deem that he was doing *honour* to God’s Word, instead of the reverse; and he might even think that he could justify the action by his Lord’s command. Now, the circumstances which have led to the restriction here are, that children of different religious denominations are assembled in the same school-room; and *our motive\** for acquiescence in it is:—*that we may do the greatest amount of good, which is possible under the circumstances*. It will hardly be maintained, that there is anything in this to justify the charge of dishonour to God’s Word.

\* With the motive for the imposition of this restriction on the part of the State, we are, in our present inquiry, not concerned. It is, as is well known, that the rights of conscience may be protected.

If then, as we believe, the restriction in question be not directly forbidden, its lawfulness or unlawfulness can only be ascertained by an examination of its results, and by a comparison of these with the requirements of God's Law.

This, accordingly, has been the course often taken by the opponents of the National System. It is said that the Teacher of a National School is not at liberty to rebuke a child for any moral offence, nor to show him, and others, that it was a violation of God's Holy Law ; and upon this point great stress has been laid in the recent discussion of this question. But is the statement a correct one ? Is not the Teacher at liberty to refer to *the commandments*, and to point out, in the presence of *all* the assembled children, in what manner the particular offence is a violation of that comprehensive moral code ? And, if the school be under a Protestant Patron, may he not revert to the subject in the presence of *all the Protestant children*, at the next hour devoted to religious instruction, and exhibit to them the higher motives to obedience which the Gospel displays ? As regards the Protestant child, many an earnest teacher, who looks at these Rules in their practical bearing upon the moral and religious welfare of the child, would ask no more. The case of the Roman Catholic child, indeed, is different ; and for him, it is admitted, the moral lesson is incomplete. But this cannot be helped in any case. In the National School the Teacher may give religious instruction to *all who will receive it*. *In no school can he give more* ; for he cannot compel the unwilling, and he



even disclaims the desire to do so. And surely it will not in any degree remedy this imperfection, to close the door of the school against the child, and thus to sever the tie which binds him to the Protestant Clergyman, and to the children of his peculiar flock !

But it is said, whatever be the case as regards other men, the Minister of the Gospel is not free to enter into such a compact,—he is under a solemn obligation to “instruct the people committed to his charge” out of the Holy Scriptures.

Now I entreat my reverend brethren to consider, whether in consenting to refrain from the Scriptural teaching of any of their parishioners, during certain hours on certain days in each week, they are really acting in opposition to the solemn obligation which they have undertaken. If so, they cannot, of course, connect themselves or their schools with the Board. But let them be quite consistent ! They placed themselves under a similar obligation to teach the “people committed to their cure and charge,” to keep and observe “the Doctrine, and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, . . . as this Church and Realm hath received the same ;” and the very same reason which holds them aloof from the Board, because its rules oblige them to withhold the Bible during the hours set apart for secular instruction, should also make them hold aloof from the Church Education Society, because that Society has imposed a similar restriction on the doctrinal teaching, and religious worship of the Church, in their schools. We do not of course mean to assert that the words of the Bible, and the ordinances of the Church, are of equal im-

X | portance and authority. All that we are concerned with at present is, that they are equally related to the engagements entered into by the Priest at his Ordination; and that he cannot, *on that ground*, separate himself from the National Board, unless he also separates himself from the Church Education Society. In the sequel, we hope to point out a mode by which all objections of this nature, whatever be their weight and applicability, may be obviated.

We now proceed to consider this question in another aspect, which deserves our earnest regard.

X | The consideration to which we refer, is the decision which has been come to upon the same question *in other countries*, and even in our own under *other circumstances*. And although we are free to admit that no amount of *authority*, however weighty, should determine our conduct against the *clear* light of our own reason and conscience; yet it will be allowed by all, that the concurrent testimony of the consciences of others should have great weight with us, in causing us to consider the subject carefully before we come to an opposite conclusion respecting it, and even in inducing us to *re-consider* the grounds of the conclusion at which we have arrived. We shall see, too, in the course of our inquiry, that there are features in the present case which give to this authority an almost irresistible weight. Let us then examine how the question of the Religious Education of the young has been solved by Other Nations.

We begin with Prussia, because it has been the first country in Europe in which the State has taken

in hand the education of the people ; and because the condition of primary education there is probably the most advanced of any in Europe. The law of Prussia, and of all the German States, requires that every child shall be educated ; and for the last ten or twelve years the expenses of this education have been wholly defrayed by the State. In carrying out this law, the State leaves it to the inhabitants of the locality to decide, whether the education shall be conducted on the *mixed*, or on the *separate* system ; *i.e.*, whether the children of different denominations shall be taught in the *same*, or in *different* schools. And this question is usually determined by them in a very practical way. If the population be sufficiently numerous to have *two distinct schools*, one for Protestants and another for Roman Catholics, two separate schools are founded. Where this is not the case, *one mixed school* is established. Now,—and here we come to the facts which bear upon our own question—*wherever a mixed school is established*, the children, whose Parents are of a different religious denomination from the Teacher of the school, must be allowed to absent themselves during his religious lessons.\*

We see then, that although the system differs from that established in Ireland, in allowing the people themselves the choice between the mixed and the separate systems, yet that, whenever the former is adopted, a Rule corresponding to that of the National Board is made a part of it. And this is done, be it remarked, without the slightest difficulty or obstruc-

\* Kay on the Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe, vol. ii., p. 58.

tion, on the part either of the people themselves, or of their religious ministers. No Clergyman, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, questions the lawfulness or the equity of this rule.

But in Prussia, it may be said, the two leading sects are nearly *equally divided* ; and when such is the case, the circumstances are the most favourable to the application of such a rule. This is true ; but it does not affect, nor even modify, the question of *principle*. However, let us see how the case stands when such equality does not exist.

In Saxony the majority of the population is *Protestant*, the number of Roman Catholics in the entire kingdom not exceeding 30,000. Yet in Saxony the very same rule is enacted. The Teachers in the great majority of the schools are, of course, Protestant. But when the Roman Catholics are unable, from the smallness of their numbers, to provide a separate school for themselves, and when, in consequence, they send their children to the Protestant school, they must be allowed to remove them during the time devoted to religious instruction.\*

In Austria, on the other hand, the great majority of the population is *Roman Catholic*, and the schools are, for the most part, under the direction of the Roman Catholic priesthood. Yet even there—in a Roman Catholic country, and one in which the principles of constitutional and personal freedom are, in other respects, far less understood than with us—even in Austria, the Managers of the Roman Catholic school must receive the Protestant child, if his

\* Kay on the Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe, vol. II., p. 247.

Parents require it, and give him the benefit of the *secular* instruction imparted in the school, while they permit him to leave it during the hours of religious instruction.\*

A similar rule is enforced in nearly every other State of central Europe. It is the law in France,† in Belgium,‡ and in Switzerland.§ And whether the population be mainly Protestant,—as in Saxony, and in the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland,—or Roman Catholic, as in Austria, in France, and in Belgium,—the law is precisely the same in reference to this point: the most perfect toleration exists in the teaching of the young, and that toleration is carried into effect, in their mixed schools, by a rule corresponding to the distinctive Rule of the National Board.

It is impossible but that this should raise a doubt, at least, of the tenableness of the position taken by so many of the Irish Clergy. When we find the same law enforced in so many different States, with populations mixed in various proportions, and under governments of every form, from that of an absolute monarchy to a pure republic, it is not easy to doubt that it is fundamentally just and righteous. And, it may be observed, these facts apply to *both* the questions to which we have referred at the outset—the duty of the *State*, and *our own* duty—for, in the countries referred to, the rule is enacted by their respective Governments, and it is unresisted by the People. It is true that, in most of these States, instruction in the Bible forms a part even of the *united*

\* Kay, p. 323.

† Ibid, p. 411, 412.

‡ Barnard.—*National Education in Europe*, p. 586.

§ Kay, p. 351.

education. But its use is *not unrestricted*; and all the arguments which have been usually brought against the rules of the National Board with reference to the Bible, apply equally to any limitation in the use of it.

But there are some who will be ready to put aside this inference. It will be admitted, perhaps, that there are many good and conscientious men among the Protestants of the Continent; but, it may be said, their habits of thought on all religious questions, and more particularly on the nature of Inspiration, and on the respect due to God's Word, are so different from our own, that their views may be expected to differ from ours upon the question at issue. Let us therefore look *nearer home*.

The case of the University of Dublin has been already referred to, more than once, in this discussion; and although it is, in many of its circumstances, different from that of the primary school, yet, so far as the *principle* is concerned, there is no difference. The practice and usage of Trinity College with respect to religious instruction—practice and usage which have all the weight of law—are those prescribed by the National Board to the Patron and Teacher of the non-vested school.\* But it may be useful to remark, in addition to what has been lately so well said on this

\* This agreement has been pointed out by many, who possessed every qualification to enable them to form a judgment concerning it—such as the late Dr. Elrington, who was Professor of Divinity in the University, and who had been connected with the Irish Education question as Honorary Secretary to the Church Education Society; and the present Provost of Trinity College. See Report of the University Commissioners, p. 291.

subject,\* that the University has carried out this principle of religious toleration even beyond the limits of statutable authority. The Royal Letter of 1794 commanded that Roman Catholics should be at liberty to enter the University of Dublin, and to take Degrees there. This statute plainly required that they should receive the secular instruction given in the College, without being compelled to attend the religious instruction, or the religious worship, prescribed by the earlier statutes for all. And the Heads of the College acted on this assumption. But they went beyond this. It is manifest that the *spirit* of the statute of 1794 applied equally to Protestant Dissenters, although, in terms, it referred to Roman Catholics only. Accordingly, the Heads of the College acted on the same rule with respect to them also; and it was not until the year 1855, more than half a century later, that this proceeding was legalized by Royal statute.

Let us now proceed to cases more closely parallel.

In the Report of the Endowed Schools Commission, we are presented with the rules by which the Royal Schools are governed, as respects the admission and education of Roman Catholics. From it we learn that these schools—primarily founded, like the University of Dublin, for the education of members of the Established Church—have, like the University, been freely opened to Roman Catholics and other Dissenters; and that the Commissioners of Education, in doing this, have provided that no Roman Catholic shall be compelled to attend any

\* *The Education Question. Thoughts on the Present Crisis*, pp. 16 & 17.

religious instruction to which his parents object.\* Now it surely will not be maintained that in this case, and in the education of the poor man's child, the *principle* involved is different, or that it is *lawful* to do in the one case, what would be *sinful* in the other. And yet this difficult *thesis* must be maintained by those Prelates, who hold that compliance with the rule of the National Board is unlawful in the sight of God, while yet they *act* upon a *contrary* rule, as Commissioners of Education.

But we have not yet done with the argument from authority. We have already spoken of the course taken by the University of Dublin, in reference to her own *alumni*. We have now to point out the fact, that the principle of the Rule of the National Board has been recognized by both the English Universities. In the arrangements made for what have been called "middle-class examinations," the Statute, passed by the convocation of the University of Oxford in 1857, ordains as follows :—"Fiat examinatio in rudimentis Fidei et Religionis, nisi alicujus parentes, ve lqui in loco parentis sint, hanc renuerint." A similar rule has been adopted by the University of Cambridge in reference to the same subject ; and it is provided by it "that every candidate be examined in religious knowledge, *unless his parents or guardians object to such examination.*" It is to be specially noted that

\* Report of the Endowed School Commissioners. Evidence, vol. ii., pp. 105-6. The course adopted in the Royal Schools is acted on, it is believed, in every private school in Ireland for the education of children of the upper and middle classes.



the Bible forms the leading, and the *only necessary* subject, of this part of the examination.

We have thus seen that the rules of the National Board relating to Religious Instruction, which have been characterized as sinful and dishonouring to God's Holy Word, have not only been enacted, in substance, by almost every State in Europe, but that they are, moreover, the rules according to which the education of the upper and middle classes is conducted in England and in Ireland. If such rules be lawful in the one case, we repeat, they cannot be unlawful in the other. The cases are identical, *so far as principle is concerned*—and the Committee of the Church Education Society declare, in their last report, that the question at issue is “one of principle and conscience;” while in renewing “their solemn protest against the principle of the National System of Education,” they base that protest upon grounds *absolutely general*, and applicable to *all cases*.

But there are some who will maintain that there *is* an essential difference between the cases above mentioned, and that of the National Board. A Patron, who connects his school with the Board is required, it may be said, to enter into “an engagement” to comply with the rules of the System; while in most of the cases to which we have referred, no such “pledge” is required, and the recipient is free. This view was put forward at the late meeting of the Church Education Society, by the nobleman who occupied the chair. We feel sure that in maintaining this distinction, the speaker was quite sincere; and we know that there are those, whose

consciences revolt at such a pledge, while they would probably consider themselves at liberty to act under the restrictions imposed, if there were no such engagement. But have these persons fairly considered their position? They *know* the rules of the system with which they connect themselves, and they *accept the aid* granted by the State,—and yet they do not hold themselves bound, because they have given *no formal engagement*! And surely their case is not improved, if they believe that they are free, and yet do not avail themselves of their freedom. We feel sure that the same persons would reject such reasoning as this in the ordinary business of life, in which their judgments were not warped by erroneous views of moral duty.

Before concluding this inquiry, it seems necessary to refer to the statements which have been put forth with authority on the other side, by the Church Education Society, and by its foremost defenders. We shall commence with the letter addressed by the Bishop of Ossory to certain of the Clergy of his united dioceses.\*

The occasion which called forth this letter is well known to all. The Lord Primate had recently advised his Clergy to connect their schools with the National Board, when they could not by any other means maintain them in an efficient state. To the central Committee of the Church Education Society, of which body he was a President, his Grace wrote

\* Letter to the Clergy whose Schools are connected with the Diocesan Church Education Societies in the united dioceses of Ossory, Ferns, and Leighlin.

to the same effect ; and it was known to many that this counsel was favourably received, and even seconded, by many members of that body, including one whose position in the Society, no less than his personal character, would lend much weight to his advocacy. It was under such circumstances that the Bishop of Ossory addressed his own Clergy upon the same topic, and with the opposite counsel. And here therefore, if any where, we might expect the principle at issue to be re-stated, and enforced if possible with new arguments. For the first question for the consideration of each of those, to whom the advice of the Primate was tendered, whether directly or indirectly, plainly was—can I *lawfully* accept it? And upon the answer which each man's conscience gave to that question would depend, mainly, the course that he would pursue in reference to it.\* Accordingly the Bishop of Ossory invites his readers to examine anew the fundamental rule of the National Board, and to decide for themselves whether the restrictions it imposes are such as they could lawfully submit to. To assist them in this examination he describes what he believes to be the effects of the rule ; he asks his readers whether, with such consequences impending, they can lawfully exchange the liberty of the Church Education school for the bondage of the National Board ; and he expresses his own conviction, that if they con-

\* It has been most unwarrantably assumed by many, in the discussion to which the Primate's letter has given rise, that the advice which it contained was intended for *all*, whether their consciences approved, or *disapproved*, of the course suggested. "No such distinction of persons was, indeed, expressed in the letter ; but may we not conclude that it was *not expressed*, simply because the writer thought it could not fail to be *understood* ?

sult their "own consciences honestly, and honestly answer as in the presence of God," their answer must be that they cannot.

This is strong and confident language—strong in any case, but eminently so under the actual circumstances. We feel sure that at the moment of penning this sentence, the writer overlooked the fact, that many of the Irish Clergy, including the majority of those of his own order, had come to an *opposite conclusion* ; and that among them was the venerated Prelate, whose advice he so earnestly dissuades others from accepting. We cannot think that he meant, even by implication, to deny that these men had formed their convictions *honestly*, or without a due sense of the solemn responsibility of the question. But let us consider the question itself, and examine whether the consequences described are such, as to prevent the exchange which the Primate has recommended, and which the Bishop of Ossory so earnestly deprecates.

In order to judge of these consequences, we must consider them separately, as they affect the Church of England children, and those Roman Catholic children whose parents object to have them taught the Bible. And this accords with the mode in which the Bishop of Ossory himself has treated the question. In his letter to his Clergy, he considers the operation of the rule in reference to the latter class ; and in his speech delivered at the meeting of the Church Education Society (and which he wished to be regarded as supplemental to what he had recently written), he discusses the same question with relation to the former. We shall take the

subject in the same order, commencing with the case of those Roman Catholic children, "who, under the operation of the rule, will receive no religious instruction at all in the school."

Now, who would suppose, in reading the earnest words in which the Bishop has portrayed the spiritual condition of these children under the rule of the system,\* that, as *respects their religious teaching*, the school of the Church Education Society, and that of the National Board under a Protestant patron, are similarly circumstanced? and yet it is so. For the case contemplated is that of the children, whose Parents would *withdraw them* from the National School during the hour in which the Bible is read. Such children, it is plain, *would not be permitted to enter* the Church Education School *at all*; and the only difference between the two cases is—that, while they are excluded altogether from the latter school, they are permitted to receive the benefit of *secular* instruction, at least, in the former. When the parents do not object to have their children taught the Bible, *they may be taught equally in both schools*.

It may perhaps be said, in reply to this, that Roman Catholic parents, who object to their children being taught the Bible, often leave them in the Church Education school, because there is no other school in the vicinity where they can obtain secular instruction on other terms, or because the secular instruction is better there; and that such persons would withdraw their children from the Bible

\* Letter, pp. 19 & 20.

Class, if they could do so without the loss of other advantages. The former of these motives to attendance in the Church schools no longer holds ; for the National schools under Roman Catholic patronage are *now* so numerous, and so generally diffused, that few Roman Catholic parents are driven to the alternative here supposed.\* And the latter motive cannot operate at all, in the case considered by the Lord Primate and the Bishop of Ossory, which was that of the poorer, and therefore *inferior* Church schools. So much for the statement, considered as *matter of fact*. But the motives which are supposed to operate here are themselves objectionable. Temporal advantages of any kind are not to be held out as inducements to others to do what they believe to be wrong. Most right-minded men will admit, for example, that it is not justifiable to offer a meal in the school to poor children, for the purpose of inducing them to attend, and read the Bible, if they, or their Parents, are persuaded that they ought not to do so. *The end does not justify the means*. Hence the removal of these motives, as such, is in itself desirable ; and the results of such removal, if any, constitute no valid objection to the connexion of the school with the Board.

Let us now turn to the case of the Church children, and to their relative position under the two systems.

In the speech of the Bishop of Ossory, already referred to, he gave his hearers to understand that

\* This is fully admitted by the Bishop of Ossory himself. *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the United Dioceses of Ossory, Ferns, and Leighlin*. September, 1854, pp. 71 & 72.

both he himself, and the Society, whose cause he was advocating, regarded this as the *chief* question. For he informed them that the distinctive rule of the Church Education Society, which required the reading of the Bible by all the children of the school who could read intelligently, was primarily intended for the Church of England children, and not (as has been commonly supposed) for the Roman Catholics.\* Is it then the case, that what the Clergy have been so long contending for had reference, mainly, to the difference of position in which the Church of England child is placed under the two systems? If so, we have the testimony of the Bishop of Cashel, that the point is one not worth contending for! For in a speech delivered by him at another meeting of the same Society, held many years ago, he told his startled hearers, that he could, as Patron of a National School, give a perfect education to the children of his own flock; and that he felt himself constrained to hold aloof from the System, only on account of the relation in which it placed him towards the Roman Catholic children.† What then are the mem-

\* The following are among the words of the speaker, as reported in one of the daily newspapers:—"Nor do I mean to deny, that it was the intention and object of the Society to give the benefits of the education given in its schools to children not belonging to its communion. But what I maintain is, as is evident from the fundamental law, that these were secondary objects, but that the primary object was the religious education of the children of the Church."  
 . . . "The distinctive rule of this Society was framed in direct connexion with this primary object of the Society, and not in connexion with its secondary objects."

† We believe that this statement occasioned much surprise in the minds of many present, who knew nothing more of the National Board than what they had been told by their leaders; and that it even had the effect of making some converts to the System. Its truth has, however, been attested by the late Dr. Elrington, and by other competent witnesses

bers of the Church Education Society to think, if their chiefs thus differ upon the question at issue? How are they to maintain the unequal contest which they have so long bravely waged, if *the very grounds* of their opposition to the State System are thus undetermined? "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

But it is of more importance to us to inquire which of these opposite views is the just one.

In the non-vested school under a Protestant Patron, the Protestant child may receive daily Scriptural instruction, to any extent which the patron thinks advisable, and which he has the means to give, provided only that the time for communicating that instruction be fixed beforehand, and that it does not encroach upon the hours of secular instruction, which must be at least four in the day. In the Church Education school, the time for religious instruction is fixed also; and the only difference, as regards the Church child, is—that in the latter reference may be made to the Bible at *any hour* of the day, while in the National School Scriptural teaching can take place only at the *hours set apart* for religious instruction. Surely this difference is not one of such vital importance to the child, that, for its sake, the Clergy should have placed themselves in antagonism to the Government system for the last thirty years! We know indeed, that many entertain a conscientious objection to such restriction, *as it affects themselves*, and their supposed obligations; and we have already adverted to it in this aspect. But most practical men will agree with the Bishop of Cashel,



in regarding the education which may be given under such rules sufficient, *as regards the children of our own communion.*

All the other arguments, recently advanced by the Bishop of Ossory upon this question, rest upon the lower ground of expediency, and are derived from "the consequences which would be likely to follow,\* if the advice given by the Primate to his own Clergy, were acted on generally throughout the country." His main object seems to be to prove that the great majority of the Irish Clergy have pledged themselves, in one way or other, to the supposed principle to which we have so often referred, and cannot now connect their schools with the National Board without the grossest inconsistency. And he draws a vivid picture of the evil results of such inconsistency, as affecting the estimation in which they would hereafter be held by the people of their own flock, and by their English brethren.

In both parts of this argument we believe the statements to be overcharged.

As regards the original position of the Clergy in reference to the National System, there can be no doubt that there are many (especially among the younger Clergy) who, while they held themselves

\* The inapplicability of arguments of this nature, in the present case, has been stated elsewhere, with his usual perspicuity and force, by the Bishop of Ossory himself. "Such calculations," he says, "calculations of the effects of our actions on our own or other's interests, are only fitly resorted to, to determine our choice between two courses, when it is clear that, so far as duty and principle are concerned, both are open to us. But till that question is settled, and still more after it has been settled in the negative, such calculations have no place." *Charge*, 1845, p. 53.

aloof from that System, did not believe that in taking the opposite course they would be guilty of a sin. And, for those who *did* hold that extreme view, and who may have even asserted it publicly, it is surely allowable to re-consider the question, and to come to a different conclusion respecting it, if they find just grounds for so doing. No one, perhaps, will directly question this; for there could be no meaning in discussing the subject at all, if this were not allowable. And the Bishop himself admits it, when he says to his own Clergy: "I do not mean that you should confirm this declaration now, or continue to act upon it, because you made it then, and have since repeated it, but that you should examine the rule, etc." Now, assuming such a change to have taken place in any man's mind—and every one knows that the cases in which it has occurred are numerous—is he to be false to himself, and to Truth, because he has not the manliness to admit his error? Is he to allow others to suppose that his convictions are unchanged, and thus, as far as his influence reaches, to mislead them? And for what?—because he dreads the reproach of inconsistency! The wrong that he does to himself, and to others, by such moral cowardice, far outweighs all the evil results of instability.

But these results, also, seem to be unduly magnified in the apprehensions of the Bishop. The present age is one characterized, above all others, by the freedom with which received views on important questions are discussed; and men are too familiar with the changes of opinion, which often follow such discussion, to be much surprised when

they occur. They only need to be assured that the change, in any particular case, is the result of a sincere conviction, and that it has been arrived at without rashness or precipitancy. And the grounds of such assurance are to be found in the case before us. In the large personal sacrifices which they have made, the Clergy, as a body, have given the most convincing proofs of the sincerity of the conviction, which debarred them so long from the advantages of the State system. And they have every right to be regarded as sincere, also, when that conviction is changed; even though the change be one which brings those advantages within their reach. As to precipitancy, the wonder will be—not that they should have changed their opinions—but that they should have held to them so long; for we may be quite sure that the bulk of the Laity have long since settled in the conviction, that the Clergy are mistaken in their view of duty on this question.

We have dwelt, almost exclusively, upon the arguments advanced by the Bishop of Ossory on behalf of the Church Education Society. His great ability, and his long and earnest advocacy of its cause, along with his rank and high personal character, have pointed him out as an acknowledged leader; and, in fact, that portion of the Report of the Society, which bears upon the contested question, only repeats his words. We may therefore be sure that we have before us, in his statements, all that can be urged with advantage on that side of the question. For this reason it is needless to discuss what was said by others, and especially by another

President of the Society, upon the recent occasion ; and we are glad to be spared the task. There are, probably, few among the friends of the Church who did not feel pain in reading the unseemly words to which we refer ; and there are fewer still in whom it did not cause a feeling of indignation that such words should have been applied to our revered Primate, by a Prelate of the same Church, surrounded by her Clergy, and advocating the cause of Scriptural education, of which the Primate was, and is, the munificent supporter. But unbridled language does not serve the cause of Truth ; and it is a weapon sure to recoil on him who uses it, and on the cause in which it is employed.

We have thus endeavoured to remove the chief obstacle, which has prevented the co-operation of the Clergy with the State in the work of educating the people. The rule of the National System, with regard to religious instruction, is regarded by the Government as the embodiment of its essential principle ; and so long as the Clergy conceive that they are prevented, on principle, from acquiescing in that rule, so long is the approach to reconciliation debarred at the outset. Those of them, on the other hand, who acknowledge the *lawfulness* of submitting to that rule, are free to examine the System in its other aspects, and to consider whether it be *expedient* to connect their schools with it, and if so, under what conditions ?

And the present juncture seems to be favourable to such consideration. The Secretary of State for Ireland has given the Presidents of the Church Education Society to understand, that the Government

were prepared to consider any modification of the System which should be proposed by the Clergy of the Established Church, provided that it was consistent with the fundamental principles of the System ; and more recently the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland has, in his place in the House of Lords, reiterated the same assurance. Assuming, then, that we are free to accept the System upon such terms, the fault will lie with us if they are not proposed. It may be useful, therefore, to consider briefly what modifications are required in the System, in order to render it available for the benefit of the Church.

There is one change in the rules of the National System, without which, it is believed, the Clergy would not be justified in connecting their schools generally with the Board. The number of *vested*, or strictly *neutral* schools, is very limited ; and, of the *non-vested* schools, more than 3,000 are under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Priesthood. The Protestant poor would not willingly send their children to schools of the latter class ; and there are probably few of their pastors who would recommend them to do so. If any entertained doubts on the subject, the recent occurrences in this country, in which the most sacred parental rights have been flagrantly violated, and the law of the land set at defiance for the purposes of proselytism, must suffice to remove them. This state of things is deeply to be deplored : but it leaves no choice. The rules of the National System should, then, be so far modified, that all the *smaller* schools under Church of England Patrons may be taken into connexion, notwithstanding the existence of another National School

in the locality ;—or else the number of vested schools should be largely increased.

It may be said, perhaps, that this amounts to an abandonment of the *mixed* character of the System ; and that the schools, which were intended to be such that no child should be excluded from any, would become more and more *denominational*. This is to a great extent true ; and yet the measure is in accordance with the existing practice of the Commissioners. It is well known that the Board have, in numerous instances, established two or more schools in the *same locality*, under patrons of *different religious denominations*, when the number of children was not such as to require the multiplication ; and that the existence of a National School, at any place, has not been regarded by them as a sufficient reason for refusing to establish another.\* And the denominational principle has been carried still further, by taking into connexion the Convent schools, which are admitted by the officers of the Board themselves to be *practically exclusive*.† Hence, an extension of the *non-vested* schools, such as is here proposed, would not be at variance with the principles upon which the National System has been conducted for many years ; and if the Commissioners deemed such extension inexpedient in any particular instance, the difficulty might be overcome by the establishment of a *vested* school.

\* The Archbishop of Dublin has stated that there has been a leaning on the part of the Commissioners "towards the establishment of a separate system—that is, of having a Protestant school, and a Roman Catholic school, in each place where it could be established."—*Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the working of the National System of Education in Ireland*, pp. 188-9, 203.

† *Ibid*, pp. 106-7.

But there is another modification of the System, which demands the earnest consideration, not only of the Clergy of the Established Church, but of all who are interested in the state of primary education in this country.

The Archbishop of Dublin has pointed out the fact, that the National System of education has deteriorated. The common religious element, which it was agreed—almost by a solemn compact—should form part of its *united* teaching, has been seriously lessened ; and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy have left no doubt of their intention, if it be possible, to remove it altogether. Its condemnation has been pronounced by the synod of Thurles ; and the Roman Catholic Commissioners of the Board have endorsed the sentence.\* If the Clergy of the Established Church were prepared to act together in this grave juncture, they might, perhaps, hope that the Government would consent to restore the System to its primitive condition. The Heads of the Irish Government have expressed their willingness to consider any modification of the System, which was consistent with its fundamental principles ; and what more reasonable modification could be proposed, than that of *restoring it to its integrity*? And if they look elsewhere, they cannot fail to find abundant reasons for such a restoration. There is hardly a country in Europe, in which the religious element does not temper *more largely* the education which is given to all in common. In Holland, which

\* Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the working of the National System of Education in Ireland, (6111, 8785, 8870.)

affords perhaps the most perfect example of a successful system of united education, the Bible is made the basis of religious and moral instruction in the school; and those portions of it, in which all Christians are agreed, are taught to all in common.\* And the same thing is true, to a greater or less extent, in most other countries of Europe.† Scriptural instruction is *restricted* indeed; but it is *not excluded* from the united teaching.

Such appear to be among the more important modifications in the National System itself, which are called for, in order to adapt it to the wants of the country. It would be easy to extend the list; but such a course would not tend to bring about the reconciliation desired by all reasonable men. Those who honestly seek such a result, will be content with what they regard as essential. But there are other measures which it may be advisable to take, which concern more immediately the Clergy themselves, and their relation to the schools, and

\* Mr. Nicholls, in his report on the Condition of the Labouring Poor in Belgium and Holland, says—"The schools contain, without distinction, the children of every sect of Christians. The religious and moral instruction afforded to the children, is taken from the pages of Holy Writ; and the whole course of education is mingled with a frequent reference to the great general evidences of revelation." . . . "The great principles and truths of Christianity, in which all are agreed, are likewise carefully inculcated; but those points which are the subjects of difference and religious controversy, form no part of the instruction of the schools." See Kay.—*Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe*, vol. ii, p. 445. See also Bache.—*Report on Education in Europe*, pp. 207, 214.

† See Report on Elementary Public Instruction in Europe, by the Rev. Calvin Stowe, quoted by Dr. Henry Barnard, in his work on National Education in Europe, p. 49. Dr. Bache, in speaking of the German schools, says—"There is no express instruction in morals; but it is because the morals of the Scriptures mingle with their daily lessons."—*Education in Europe*, p. 284.



which are more completely in their own power. With a brief reference to these we shall conclude.

It needs no proof, that the primary duty of the Minister of Religion is the *spiritual instruction* of those committed to his charge. *Secular instruction* forms no part of the task appointed to him, either by the Master whom he serves, or by His Church; and it cannot be considered to fall within his sphere of duty, otherwise than as it is connected with his religious teaching. In the old parochial schools, which were limited, practically, to the children of the Church, this connexion was of course maintained; for there were many obvious reasons for maintaining it, more especially in the case of the children of the poor. But in the mixed schools which succeeded them, when the State undertook the task of educating the people, provision had to be made for the education of children of *all religious denominations*; and, to effect this in one and the same school, it was necessary to impose *restrictions* of some kind or other upon *religious teaching*. Accordingly such restrictions were imposed in the schools of the Kildare-place Society, in those of the National Board, which took their place, and even in those of the rival system established by the Clergy of the Established Church. All such restrictions—be they greater or less—imply *a separation*, to some extent, between *secular* and *religious* teaching; and, by the very fact of such separation, the position of the Clergy of the Established Church in reference to the primary schools was changed.

It is true this change was not contemplated by the Commissioners who first propounded the scheme

of National Education in Ireland. Their intention was, that the *parochial schools* should continue as before, and even receive aid from the State. But this was *not* done. The parish schools merged in the *mixed* schools, whether established by the State or by the Church; and the consequence has been, that the unrestricted religious teaching, formerly imparted in them, has given place to teaching more or less restricted, according as they became connected with the National Board, or with the Church Education Society.

Here then is the difficulty. The Clergy of the Established Church are bound, both by the law of God, and by the obligations into which they have entered at Ordination, to give *religious instruction* to all who are committed to their charge. They are under no such obligation—and it is no part of their duty—to give *secular instruction*. And since the religious instruction in every mixed system is more or less *restricted*, and more or less *separated* from the secular, they have, in adopting this system, become involved in a task which does not properly belong to them, and without the motive which originally led to it. The anomaly is, of course, the greatest in the National School, where the restriction in the religious teaching is greatest.

We believe that many of the Clergy regard this as an obstacle to their co-operation in the National system, while they fail to observe that the same objection, although in a lower degree, lies against their connexion with other systems to which they have no repugnance.

But the objection, in any case, is easily overcome.

Those who feel its weight have only to hand over to others the *secular education* of the mixed schools, and to confine their superintendence to that which falls within their own proper sphere of duty — the *religious instruction of their flock*. To carry out this, all that is necessary is to transfer the schools to the patronage of some Church of England layman resident in the parish, or to a committee of such laymen. Such persons may, if they shall think fit, leave it to the parishioners of their own communion to determine, whether the restriction of the religious teaching shall be carried out to the full extent demanded in the National System, or whether, on the other hand, they are willing to assess themselves, to support a less restricted system by voluntary contributions. If the latter of these courses be adopted, the school will remain in connexion with the Church Education Society, and the difficulty of carrying it on effectively will be overcome. If the parishioners choose the former course, the school will be maintained by the State. In this case, no less than in the former, the Patron will have the power of prescribing the course of religious instruction to be given in the school, subject, of course, to the fundamental rule of the Board ; and unless there were a misunderstanding between the pastor and his flock, which would mar altogether his efficiency in the parish, there can be no doubt that the course so prescribed would be such as he would himself desire.

We are prevented, by the length to which these pages have already extended, from entering further into the consideration of this particular topic. But

the subject is an important one ; for the new position of the clergyman in reference to the school, will affect materially his duties, as well as his rights, in relation to it.

But there is another measure, relative to scriptural and religious teaching, which may be superadded to almost any general system of education, but for the application of which the Irish National System seems to afford peculiar facilities. In the larger parishes in Ireland there are often several schools—too many, for the most part, to receive the constant superintendence of the parish Minister, if regular religious instruction in them were added to his other onerous duties. Accordingly that instruction is, in most cases, delegated to the Teacher of the school ; and the Clergyman of the parish is generally compelled to rest content with an occasional visit, and to test the manner in which the Teacher has fulfilled the task by an occasional inspection and examination. To remedy this, it has been proposed\*—and the proposition demands the earnest attention of the friends of the Church—that a society should be formed, whose object it should be to educate and to support a body of men, to act under the direction of the Clergy of the Established Church in the religious education of the young. It is easy to see how such a system might be worked. Under the rules of the National System, one day in each week may be set apart for separate religious instruction ; and the same thing may, of

\* A Letter to the Honorary Secretaries of the Church Education Society, by the Very Rev. Edward N. Hoare, Dean of Waterford. Appendix.